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SUBJECT: BOZIZE'S SUPPORT FOR BASHIR: THE CAR PERSPECTIVE

REF: BANGUI 061

[¶1.](#) (SBU) CAR president Francois Bozize's public demonstration of support for Sudanese president Bashir (reftel) is easy to understand in the context of good neighborliness and African solidarity, but other factors may be at play. Bozize fears, with some reason, that he may also be under investigation by the ICC. Bozize attended the opening of the ICC's Bangui office and was apparently happy to have investigations conducted into the responsibility of former president Felix-Ange Patasse for the abuses committed by former DRC Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba when Bemba's MLC forces came to Patasse's aid in 2002 (Bemba's excesses in CAR in 2001 occurred before the court came into being and are thus outside the court's jurisdiction).

[¶2.](#) (SBU) Bozize has become increasingly troubled by the prospect that he may also be investigated, and possibly charged, in relation to the excesses of his own forces after he took power on March 15, 2003. In August 2008 he wrote to UNSYG Ban requesting suspension of the proceedings against Bemba.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) The Bozize government's human rights issues are more those of error and omission rather than policy and commission. The Central African Government (CARG) has not directly targeted groups or individuals; there are no known political prisoners nor have there been systematic massacres of political or ethnic groups. At the same time, there is no evidence that the CARG sees any need to protect human rights. Thus the military is quite willing to burn villages and conduct small massacres, perhaps as much in frustration at their inability to locate rebel groups as for any other reason. The result, of course, is massive population displacement and a strong conviction on the part of the population that the demands of, and thefts by, the rebels are less dangerous than the actions of the CARG. Similarly, the police and military, and most especially the Presidential Guard (GP) commit all manner of crimes; even the murder of a police commissioner, with total impunity, (Think Tontons Macoutes). The results are raising popular discontent. Our repeated message that this weakens CARG's legitimacy seems to fall on deaf ears. Indeed, the most common reaction is that the CARG's hard line is justified by the existence of rebels, etc. A vicious cycle that appeared to have been broken at the end of 2007 may be recommencing.

[¶4.](#) (SBU) COMMENT: The ICC brings a new dimension to the whole human rights/good governance issue. If it acts as deterrence, so much the better, but based on Bozize's actions and the declarations of the African Union, we are not optimistic that the ICC is going to provide a silver bullet, at least not in the Central African Republic. Progress on protection of human rights is likely to require a hard, bilateral slog.

[¶5.](#) (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED: Another possible factor is a reported deterioration in Bozize's relationship with Chadian president Idriss Deby (Septel follows).

